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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this unit is to help elementary students make new friends among their classmates and outside the classroom. The underlying rationale is that primary students especially can benefit from the study of the characteristics of friends because they need to learn how to interact with other children, to assist in overcoming the egocentric nature of the preoperational stage. Social studies concepts encountered during the study are friendship, trust, cooperation, values, self-concept, and loyalty. The unit can serve as an introduction to such closely related concepts studied in elementary social studies as culture, cultural differences, stereotypes, discrimination, ethnic groups, pluralism, race, and prejudice. The unit begins by listing knowledge, skills, and affective objectives. Twelve instructional activities for primary and intermediate level students are described. Examples of activities include having students interview a classmate and use the interview information to introduce the student to the class, reading and discussing stories, and playing the guessing game "Who Is Being Described?" Suggestions for evaluation conclude the unit. (RM)

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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A FRIEND?

A RESOURCE UNIT FOR ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FRIENDS?

Rationale

The school year begins with twenty to thirty children entering a new classroom with a new teacher. In large school districts and areas of high mobility students may not find a classroom filled with friends. Some find a class filled with a few friends, some acquaintance, strangers, or even students they fear. Experienced teachers know that much of the success of the class in learning is directly related to the quality of the interpersonal relationships that take place within the classroom. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs mentions the the feelings of love and belonging as needs which must be filled before learning can take place. Therefore, a teacher who spends some time developing feelings of friendship among the students may well be assisting students to learn all subjects. Primary students especially can benefit from the study of the characteristics of friends because they need to learn how to interact with other children to assist in overcoming the egocentric nature of the preoperational stage.

Social studies concepts related to friends that may be encountered during the study of the characteristics of a friend are: friendship, trust, cooperation, values, self-concept, and loyalty. The study of the characteristics of friends can serve as an introduction to such closely related concepts studied in elementary social studies as: culture, cultural differences, and

stereotype, discrimination, ethnic group, pluralism, race, and prejudice. Through this unit students will be able to make new friends among their classmates and will be encouraged to make new friends outside the classroom. With the assistance of the teacher activities one through ten can be done by primary students. Activities eleven and twelve require considerable reading and writing.

Knowledge Objectives:

1. Students will list the following as characteristics of friends:

Friends share common experiences and ideas.

Friends are people with whom I enjoy doing things.

Friends are people whom I can trust.

Friends help each other without expecting rewards.

Friends agree on some but not all issues.

Friends listen to each other and respect the privacy, views, and beliefs of their friends.

Friends are not envious or jealous of the accomplishments of their friends.

2. Students will conclude that their friends have a variety of personal characteristics some of which are similar to their own and some of which are very different from their own.

3. Students will agree on the truth of the statement that a person makes friends by being a friend.

Skill Objectives

1. Students will practice interview skills.

2. Students will cooperate and work in groups.

3. Students will classify data gathered from questionnaires and interviews.

4. Students will organize data into charts and reports.

Affective Objectives

1. Students will express the belief that it is important to have friends.

2. Students will want to make friends.

3. Students will be interested in people and want to get to know people rather than accept stereotyped descriptions of groups of people.

4. Students will be able to list negative characteristics of their friends but will still like and respect their friends.

5. Students will say that race, age, or ethnic groups are not important characteristics when selecting friends.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Students draw a picture of themselves and a friend. They describe the scene they have drawn to other students. Pictures are classified by the type of activity shown i.e.; friends play together, share possessions, etc. Children are asked to tell the way they feel when doing the activity with the friend. If the students give only positive feelings, ask the students if they have shared sadness or fear with their friends.

2. Play the guessing game "Who is being Described". Children write three clues to their identity and a fourth statement "My name is _____." One student or the teacher reads the clues one at a time and asks the class to guess the student after each clue. Place the unidentified descriptions aside. Discuss which clues made it easiest to identify the student and what clues were the most difficult. Look at the unidentified clues again. Are the clues that difficult or do the students not know things about their classmates? The names may be given for the unidentified descriptions or students may decide on another way to learn which description fits which classmate.

3. Interview and Introduce: Students conduct interviews with a classmate and then using the information gained from the interview introduce that student to the remainder of the class. Prior to doing the interviewing, discuss those things that the students think would be interesting to learn about each other. Have the students draw names for the student to interview. Conduct the interviews over several days time. As the week progresses several students a day can introduce their friend to the class. Students should tell at least 5 things about the student they introduce including the thing that they personally like best about the individual. Such things as favorite games, school subjects, colors, TV shows, hobbies, special talents, and pets are all possible topics for questions during the interview.

4. Make a Wanted Poster. Students fill in the blanks on a questionnaire. WANTED A FRIEND

must be_____

must like_____

must be talented in _____

must treat me_____

must not treat me _____

5. Read stories about friends. Discuss how the friends acted toward one another. Do the students think they would like the characters. Why or why not? What question would students like to ask the characters if they could meet them.

6. Introduce a friend you have met in a book to your classmates. Tell why you liked the person in the book. Identify the special talents and likes of the character. How did the character treat others in the story?

7. Students interview an older person someone about the age of his/her grandparents. Ask the person to describe one of his/her friends and tell why he/she is friend. How long has the person known the friend? When was the last time they saw the friend? What kinds of things does he/she do with their friends? Ask the older person to tell you about a friend that he/she had when he/she was your age. When students report on the interviews classify the kinds of activities older people do or did with their friends. Do older people look for the same characteristics in friends as younger people? Discuss the ways the activities of

young friends have changed between their grand parents' youth and their own. What activities have stayed the same? Have the characteristics of friends changed?

8. Have the students list five characteristics of a friend that they believe most important. Next to each characteristic write the name of a friend who has that characteristic.

9. Given a list of adjectives, students classify the adjectives into those that describe a friend, those that do not describe a friend, and those that may describe a friend but are not requirements for a friend. Among the adjectives that may be used are: tattle tale, jealous, truthful, ambitious, trustworthy, good looking, faithful, gossipy, considerate, cooperative, loyal, fair, self-centered, envious, youthful, slim, old, Black, Indian, Chinese, Polish, Christian, and Jewish.

10. Given a list of possible activities, students classify the activities into those you do with a friend and those you do with a stranger or someone who is not a friend. Some possible activities to use are: go to their home, tell them a secret, play a game with them, accept candy from them, take a ride in a car with them, share your lunch with them, say hello to them, buy something from them, run from them, tell lies about them, say nice things about them, hug them, talk on the telephone with them, ask them for advice, and write them a letter.

11. Students make a list of the 5 characteristics they think are most important in a friend. Tell why each is an important characteristic. Pick out the one characteristic that is most important. Students compare their lists and discuss likenesses and differences. Students do not need to agree on the characteristics or their order. Students should discuss if they could be a friend of a person who selected a characteristic as most important that was different from their most important selection.

12. Students write friendly letters to extend their number of friends. Among the possibilities of pen pals are students in another school, patients in a nursing home, and children in another nation.

EVALUATION

1. The teacher should observe how the students participate and cooperate in the activities.

2.The teacher should reword each of the affective objectives as a question. i.e.; Is it possible for a friend to have some "bad" or "negative" characteristics and still remain your friend? Why is it important to have friends? The students should give their answers and explain why their answers are correct as they understand it.

3. The knowledge objectives may be reworded as true or false questions for a written test. i.e.; A friend is a person who can be trusted. Friends do not enjoy doing things together.

4. The successful completion of activities provides the opportunity to evaluate the skill objectives.

This unit was prepared by Mary E.